

Strengthening Women's Participation in Decision-making at the Local Level in Mali

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1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 302, Washington, DC 20036 USA
Tel.: 202-332-2853 FAX: 202-332-8257 Internet: WIDinfo@widtech.org

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by

Marcia E. Greenberg, Democracy Specialist, WIDTECH

Dr. Rachel-Claire Okani, WIDTECH Consultant

Development Alternatives, Inc.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Mali recently launched a decentralization process that shifts power and resources to the local level, thereby enabling communities to set priorities and allocate resources through the discussion and development of local plans of action. USAID's Democracy and Governance team in Mali (D&G team) recognized that such a new system, with which no one is yet familiar, offers women a historic opportunity. Furthermore, the success of decentralization will depend upon diverse participation and therefore benefit from purposeful inclusion of women.

The D&G team requested WIDTECH technical assistance in October 2000 to understand how women participate in decision-making at the local level and suggest how USAID might support stronger, more visible, and more effective women's civic and political participation. The aims were three-fold: (1) to have an analytic framework for understanding women's influence over decision-making in rural areas, (2) to identify activities for strengthening women's participation, and (c) to have a results framework to tie the Mission's women-focused activities together within an integrated approach.

The conceptual framework is based on women's influence over decision-making at the local level rather than on women's political participation. While recognizing that political decision-making at the local level in Mali has traditionally been limited to men, the framework suggests that women have engaged in political behavior without realizing it. There are informal mechanisms by which women influence decision-making—some private and some public, some consultative, and some with authority. The WIDTECH field assessment revealed that when men gather to discuss a village issue, they decide they should postpone the final decision to the following day in order to “sleep on it.” Often, this means that the men go home and consult with their wives. The men may return, having discussed the issue with their wives, or, in a more public political process, the women may gather the following day in small groups to discuss the issue and advise their husbands later with a unified voice.

To focus capacity-building on the current attitudes and skills of women and on what they already are doing, this concept paper proposes a definition of “women's political participation” that encompasses various means of influencing decision-making:

Women playing a role, whether formal or informal, in influencing decisions regarding the policies, priorities, and resources that affect their lives, those of their families, and their communities.

The concept paper then discusses constraints and opportunities for rural women in Mali.

The main constraints that limit rural women's ability to participate in decision-making are lack of time, traditional culture, insufficient information, and limited economic means. Regarding time, women are so burdened by household work, agricultural duties, and income-

generating activities that they have no time to think about politics or to participate in political processes. There is little time for literacy programs, discussion groups, formal politics, or participation in consultations about the new decentralization. Culture and religion vary among groups in Mali. Yet many traditions define and limit women's decision-making roles.

Information is critical because it helps citizens form positions and raises interest in decision-making. Yet important information typically flows through channels of communication that differ from those that reach women, and information rarely includes accounts that would inspire women's participation. Moreover, without economic means, women lack legitimacy or leverage in decision-making. Economic activities also enhance women's interest in governance and resources, while building a sense of empowerment for political involvement.

Along with the constraints to women's influence over local decision-making, there are opportunities, such as women's groups (*groupements de femmes*) and traditional information dissemination. One encouraging factor regarding women's future political participation in rural Mali is that *groupements de femmes*, although not visible as compared with the village associations for men, are numerous and fundamental to the socioeconomic structures and social capital of rural communities. Traditional channels of information for women—such as celebratory events, word-of-mouth, the chief's wife, town criers, theater for sensitization, and women's groups—are another asset. They are ready, familiar, and effective mechanisms for purposeful dissemination of relevant, modern, political information.

With regard to USAID's support of women's participation, another asset is the current public experimentation and experience with citizen participation in local decision-making. First, there is the "Charte de Partenariat pour la Promotion des Femmes Rurales" sponsored by the Ministry for Decentralization and implemented by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women. A participatory working group developed a platform for defining actions of an integrated local plan that states that every plan should include a minimum of 25 percent for women in all phases: activity identification, budgets, and actual expenditures. A pilot implementation project started in May 2000 to test training and participatory processes for setting priorities for communal plans.

Second, some nongovernmental organization projects are focusing on training local people to participate in community consultations. One group is helping four communes assess their needs and determine main constraints, followed by planning and advocacy campaigns. Although some effort has been made to include women, the projects seem to have encountered some of the constraints discussed above. In contrast, a women's organization has anticipated such constraints and is working in 18 localities to support women's participation in the communal system. There are likely other such projects.

Experience also may be gained from initiatives that focus on the substantive issues of importance to women, rather than with the process of community plans. One example is an organization in Segou that focuses on healthcare, particularly for women and children, and on HIV/AIDS. Because the work of the organization has been so successful, the mayor is interested in using new local resources to partner with it. This illustrates how an issue-

focused project may empower and inform women, sensitize men, and establish collaboration with local authorities to access resources.

Eight Elements for Women's Influence over Decision-making

▪ Sensitization	▪ Hope, Sense of Possibility, Empowerment
▪ Time	▪ Groups, Solidarity
▪ Information Channels	▪ Skills and Training
▪ Substantive Information Relevant to Women	▪ Motivation, Mobilization, and Action

Based on an assessment of barriers and opportunities, this paper puts forward an analytic framework consisting of eight elements for women's influence over decision-making. The paper begins by suggesting there are two predicates for supporting women's participation in decision-making in rural areas—sensitization, both for men and women; and time. Before women can take on more visible and effective roles, the men in their communities must accept it—and in fact see it as something beneficial. At the same time, women must be able to recognize and credit themselves for the roles they already play and then take some interest in playing these roles more regularly or publicly. But such interest and enhanced participation are contingent upon freeing time in women's days for political discussion, activity, and interest. Women will have more time when they have labor-saving technologies and other economic assistance.

Beyond those predicates, the necessary interventions may address four issues: information, a sense of possibility, group collaboration, and capability. Because standard processes of information dissemination do not reach the average rural woman, channels of information must be extended or diversified. In addition, women need substantive information related to their social and economic well-being and successes they can emulate. They need to hear about women in elected offices and women participating in decentralization consultations.

Economic information is also important. As women have economic interests and receive information about what they might do, they gain a sense of the possibilities: of how they can affect government to address needs such as roads, communications, credit, courts, and taxation.

Yet even with space, time, information, and expectations, women are not likely to affect decision-making unless they can work in effective collaborative ways. There must be a group sense of hope, solidarity, and capability. This is why women's groups are critical assets. Through these groups, women are already accustomed to sharing and discussing information and to working together to solve problems and overcome adversity. Although these groups of women may already influence decision-making in private spheres or indirect ways, political processes like decentralization consultations require familiarity with political processes and skills. Thus, women need new skills with which to influence such decision-making, and

training is critical. By working together, they have the opportunity to become confident and empowered.

The last element is a critical catalyst without which the others, and assistance to mitigate weaknesses related to them, may not suffice: There must be some basis for motivation, mobilization, and action. For this reason, purposeful links with the Mission's other sectoral programs—such as girls' education, literacy programs, access to credit, potable water, natural resource issues, transportation needs, and fighting HIV/AIDS—offer invaluable opportunities. Economic interests may also motivate women to engage in decision-making as they realize government's responsibility for such issues as roads, communications, credit, courts, and taxation.

As a framework for selecting activities that may together lead to meaningful results, the paper uses the eight elements to suggest five sub-Intermediate Results for achieving an Intermediate Result of "Women's Increased Participation in Local Decision-making": (1) sensitization; (2) more economic resources for women; (3) increased information for women; (4) training for women to participate in developing communal plans of action; and (5) increased recognition of women's groups. USAID's D&G program would directly support activities to develop content for increased information—that is, collecting success stories for dissemination of individual women and women's groups, which also supports the Intermediate Result related to women's groups; and on training and capacity-building. Other sector programming—relating to youth, information and radio, economic growth, education, and healthcare—would support activities that contribute to the other sub-Intermediate Results.

The paper recommends that the D&G team focus activities on capacity-building and information dissemination. It suggests that the D&G team engage other sectors, such as youth programs involving men, economic activities for women, and the information Special Objective focus on radios. It proposes a pilot activity to add a political dimension to activities where groups of women already have rallied around an issue, thereby matching their needs with the resources available through decentralization.

CHAPTER ONE

OBJECTIVE: STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZATION THROUGH WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

The Government of the Republic of Mali has set in motion a process of decentralization that shifts power and resources to communities at the local level. With 701 communes and 49 cercles, setting priorities and allocating resources in Mali will take place increasingly at the local level. Further, decentralization allows for discussion and debate about a community's needs, priorities, and resources; development of a local plan of action; and mobilization of all critical players and resources to implement that plan.

Although decentralization brings decision-making and resources to the local level, it also brings them into family space, areas where women already are and where they exercise some influence. In addition, because of the productive and reproductive roles in rural areas, women are key actors and most familiar with daily concerns and local problems. Women know both the needs of their children with respect to health, education, and nutrition and the problems of agriculture and commerce. Further, the successful launching and implementation of local development initiatives will depend on women's work and commitment.

The launching of a brand new system, to which all are newly introduced and with which none is yet familiar, offers women a historic opportunity. New systems offer brand new possibilities for establishing roles and responsibilities. If decentralization is done well, it is viewed as an open and fully participatory system that includes women in both processes and institutions. Otherwise, there is a very real risk that women and men, and girls and boys, may regard local, communal government as a male domain. Decentralization may become just the latest of the numerous decision-making mechanisms in which women's needs, perspectives, and contributions do not figure.

It is within this context that USAID/Mali requested a gender-advisory team from USAID's Office of Women in Development, through its WIDTECH project. The gender advisory team consisted of Marcia Greenberg, WIDTECH Democracy Specialist; and Rachel-Claire Okani, an African women's advocate and the author of "Femmes et Politique au Mali." The team worked for 11 days in country (October 30-November 9, 2000), meeting with USAID Strategic Objective teams; women's organizations and leaders; representatives of the Ministry for the Promotion of Woman, Child and Family, the Mission for Decentralization and Institutional Reforms, and the Direction des Collectivites Territoriales; political party representatives; USAID partner organizations; and other development partners. Outside of Bamako, the team consulted with Malians in Baguineda, Segou, and Djono. See Annex A for list of contacts.

The gender advisory team's objective was to develop a concept paper that would offer USAID an analytic framework for understanding women's political participation in rural areas. USAID also asked that the team propose several discrete activities that would further

elucidate the situation of women and test new approaches to strengthen women's political capacity within the decentralization process.

This concept paper addresses the issue in four parts. First, it proposes a working definition of "women's political participation" in rural Mali. This definition, in Chapter Two, is critical for two reasons: (1) to recognize current behavior by women that may not be formally regarded as political but that relates to efforts to influence decision-making; and (2) to anticipate a process by which women may gradually take on formal political roles, such as membership in political parties or running for office. Chapter Three describes the social, economic, and political context for women in Mali, followed by discussion of the situation of women in rural areas, including constraints to and opportunities for their political participation. In Chapter Four, we propose a framework for conceptualizing women's political participation. It includes a model results framework for discussion. Chapter Five includes two sorts of recommendations: (1) activities that would enhance women's participation in the current process and lead to increased entry of rural women into formal political spaces; and (2) guidelines by which USAID partners may improve their efforts in supporting women's political participation.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN'S "POLITICAL PARTICIPATION" IN RURAL MALI MUST ENCOMPASS THEIR "INFLUENCE OVER DECISION-MAKING"

The focus of this inquiry is on women in the rural areas, at the grassroots level. This paper analyzes the current attitudes and skills of women, what they are doing, and how USAID might contribute to their increased political participation. As a result, the paper does not address such issues as the broader agenda set during the U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing and the efforts by such groups as the Association of Women Lawyers (AJM), Association for the Progress and Defense of Women's Rights (APDF), Action Committee for the Rights of Children and Women (CADEF), and Collective of Women of Mali (COFEM)—except insofar as they are reaching to the grassroots base. Similarly, the paper does not address issues of law reform relating to women's rights, women candidates for the National Assembly, or political party organization in Bamako.

Typically, political participation is viewed in terms of actions such as membership in a political party, standing for election, holding office, debating issues, and lobbying. Yet those activities presuppose public roles and visibility. They also assume basic levels of confidence, skills, and resources.

Prior to the launching of Mali's new decentralization scheme, there were two sorts of politics at the local level: cells of the single political party of a centralized system, including local cells of the Union Nationale de Femmes de Mali; and village-based decision-making, including consensual processes led by village chiefs and village associations. Thus, for all rural residents, men and women alike, decentralization and the associated local politics establish new roles, arenas, and processes.

In fact, women are engaged in political actions without knowing it. Thus, for purposes of this conceptual framework, we begin with a definition of politics that encompasses decision-making at the local level. On the one hand, the definition recognizes that decision-making in rural Mali has traditionally been limited to men. On the other hand, it acknowledges there have been informal mechanisms by which women have been able to influence decision-making—although those processes may have been informal and, more important, invisible. To identify the baseline for women at the local level and to build on the opportunities of existing behavior, we define "political participation" to include processes that do not take place in public spaces. We suggest that women have engaged in political behavior without realizing it.

Efforts to increase women's political participation must take an incremental approach—looking to where women are now and where there are opportunities for them to enter into public and formal political spaces. To recognize how women may already participate in decision-making and to assess opportunities to enhance their influence, it is helpful to consider a variety of contexts in which they may play some role in decision-making.

There are ways in which women privately influence decision-making. This may be as individuals, when their husbands turn to them for input. Two scenarios have been frequently mentioned. In the first, men have gathered to discuss a village issue. But at the point of making a decision, they decide that perhaps they should “sleep on it” and postpone the final decision until the following day. Often, this means that the men go home and consult with their wives. Either the men return having discussed the issue with their wives or, in an even more political process, the women may gather the following day, in small groups or in their *groupements de femmes*, to discuss the issue and advise their husbands later with a unified voice. Although this may not be formal politics, it is an indirect way of participating in decision-making through consultation.

The second example is somewhat more formal and slightly more visible. In this case, the *groupement de femmes* meets to discuss the issue. The members then send an accepted representative to present their views to the men’s meeting. The women’s representative is chosen according to specific, well-recognized criteria, such as griot, a woman of a higher caste, the chief’s sister or preferred wife, or an elder woman who is beyond child-bearing age. In Goundam, for example, there is an older woman who is very experienced and well-respected and who belongs to a national Malian women’s association. Often, she is invited by men to represent the women’s interests, as was the case when the cercle Governor invited her to attend an Africare presentation. Thus, although the women may not be directly and visibly represented in the village association or the association of students’ parents and may not actually vote, this is a slightly more formal way of inserting their needs and perspectives in the decision-making.

Ways for Women to Influence Decision-making

- Private individual consultative role, such as wives to husbands
- Private organized consultative role, such as women’s groups
- Public participation in local, consensual decision-making, such as griot as emissary
- Public leadership in local, consensual decision-making—such as women taking vocal roles in meetings about new communal development plans
- Public participation in formal politics, such as political parties, lobbying
- Public leadership in formal politics, such as elected office

One way to view these opportunities and their relation to formal politics is through a matrix:

	Private	Public/Visible
Formal	Women’s groups (<i>groupements de femmes</i>) debating and formulating positions	Running for and holding elected positions, active membership in political parties, taking appointed positions
Informal (household or civil society)	Women advising husbands	Women sending a griot to village association meetings; women’s NGOs

Taking account of the current circumstances in Mali, we there propose the following definition of “women’s political participation” for USAID’s efforts to strengthen the role of Malian women in decentralization:

Women playing a role, whether formal or informal, in influencing decisions regarding the policies, priorities, and resources that affect their lives, those of their families, and their communities.

We do not suggest that definition as the final objective. Rather, we put it forward as defining the locus of attention and the means of achieving formal political participation. Moreover, it is a way of integrating political participation into development objectives and implementation.

CHAPTER THREE

OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

GENERAL CONTEXT

Mali is an extremely poor country with very high birth rates and two-thirds of the population under 25 years of age. In some rural areas—for example, in Goundam—there are serious levels of malnutrition and infant stunting. Illiteracy and low levels of education plague both men and women alike. In 1995, women's literacy was merely 9.8 percent, as compared with 46.70 percent for men. Although there has been some improvement in literacy—to 12.10 percent for women and to 48.3 percent for men by 1998—those levels are still low.

In terms of societal and programmatic efforts focused at the rural population, it is critical to recognize that 80 percent of Malians are rural residents. Most economic activity revolves around livestock, agriculture, and trade. It is in pursuit of such economic possibilities that there has been substantial south-bound migration toward irrigated areas formerly avoided because of river-borne disease that causes blindness. In the north, much of the population is nomadic or engages in trade.

A large country, Mali encompasses several different traditional cultures, each of which exhibits a cohesiveness of group that tends to resist change and to maintain traditional structures. The primary groups are Mande-speaking Bambara, Malinke, and Sarakole, which constitute 50 percent of the population; the Fulani, 17 percent; “Voltaic,” 12 percent; Songhai, 6 percent; and Touareng and related Moors, 5 percent. Each group has different social structures that affect decision-making, leadership, and women's roles. Although 90 percent of Malians are Muslims, their religious practices and interpretations have not been of a fundamentalist nature.

Women make up 51.2 percent of the Malian population. Among the more traditional Malians, girls may be married as young as 12 years old and without their consent, and women are regarded as the property of their fathers or husbands. Carrying both reproductive and considerable productive responsibilities, women are the pillars of the family and community. In their reproductive roles, birthrates in Mali are 6.7 children per family and are higher in rural than in urban areas. In 1995, contraceptive use was only 5 percent. Regarding productive activities, women engage in agricultural production, including green beans, mangos, avocados, and tomatoes. Women also make soap, grind peanuts, and engage in a variety of crafts.

Some Priority Issues for Rural Women in Mali

- Means of transport: to get to market, exchange goods, access food; to get to health clinics and to get to meetings like decentralization consultation meetings
- Education for children, including girls
- Healthcare, for children and women
- Access to water
- Income-generating activities and credit

Some tend small livestock or sell fish. Microenterprises are increasingly common—and welcome.

In the early 1990s, there was an unprecedented explosion of 5,730 associations, of which 405 were started by women or focused on women. Nevertheless, a nationwide, formal women political organization does not exist in Mali. Formerly, through the women's branches of the single-party system, Union Nationale des Femmes de Mali (UNFM) exercised some power and collaborated with local women. The local UNFM units that dated back to the days of Mousa Traore seem to have disintegrated. Further, there is no real successor and nothing that could be characterized as a broad-based, political women's movement. Many of the women of Mali who used to be politically active now work apolitically in civil society organizations. Perhaps this is a legacy of Socialist culture—that is, that women did not function as individuals in UNFM and were not accustomed to acting as advocates for themselves and their communities. For now, absent an effective structure and given limited resources in Mali, women's rights advocates tend to seek strength and opportunities through regional and international structures. Their impact and focus on rural women is limited.¹

It is in this context that the Government of Mali has launched an ambitious decentralization process involving 8 regions, 49 cercles, and 701 communes. Decentralization also is a strategy to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of Mali's fragile democracy. The transition to democracy has evolved in several phases: the end of the dictatorial regime of Mousa Traore in 1991, presidential elections of 1992, and recent local elections in 1999. One positive element has been a vibrant and diverse media, including not only many newspapers but also a proliferation of local-language radio stations. Although the government expresses the political will for decentralization, there is a strong administration in Bamako that holds power and resources. And, at the same time, there are concerns about the cohesion of the country, particularly with the north, where there is less violence than in years past but tensions still threaten peace and stability.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN IN MALI

Although the importance of women may vary by such factors as locality, economic level, tradition, and education, there are factors that limit women's participation in decision-making. These include lack of time, traditional culture, insufficient information, and limited economic means. Each is discussed below.

¹It is interesting, however, that Mali has seven women Ministers, participation that is noteworthy not only regionally but also throughout the continent. Some have suggested that the constraint to broader political participation by women at the national level has been less one of policy than a function of politicians and their culture.

Time

The leitmotif of discussions of rural women is that women are in the socioeconomic realm but not in the political realm. Rural women face two constraints to further participation in decision-making: (1) they are entirely *chargé*—that is, they are so burdened with work they do not have the time or energy to consider any political actions; and (2) both they and men may not understand the benefits of women's contributions to decision-making.

Regarding time, the day of a rural woman is filled by fetching water and firewood, cooking, working in fields, grinding grains, washing clothes, and tending to children. Her work typically begins well before sunrise (as early as 4 a.m.) and continues beyond sunset. There is no time to think about politics, to participate in political processes—and she is too exhausted to invest energy in it. There is not time for literacy programs, for discussion groups, for formal political activities, or for participating in the new decentralization consultations. Thus, women's groups are typically small and have little political power.

Culture

Another constraint is traditional culture, which may vary in its forms and extent among different groups in Mali but still defines and limits women's decision-making roles.² Among the Mande-speaking people, women tend not to be officially consulted but in Dogon culture women play consultative roles, even if somewhat privately. Although there are examples of greater participation in Segou, this is partly attributable to the proximity to Bamako and higher levels of education there.

The situation is often different in the north. Among the Touareg, women have played decision-making roles. Their history includes women as queens, women who led wars, and women as decision-makers in the homes (in fact, women own the family tent.) In terms of public and political roles, women often cannot go out and must cover themselves, which means that men must do the work and provide for them. Women rarely go out with their husbands. Yet in Timbuktu, women and their opinions have typically been sought and respected.

In Kidal, women have been allowed to participate in decision-making and to run for office. Circumstances are somewhat similar in Gao, where the Songhai are similar to the Touareg. And in Goundam, the Tomashek, like the Peul and Moors, are matriarchal, vesting women with considerable power. Although there are strong divisions between males and females in the Tomashek, including restrictions on both eye contact and direct communication, there are active women's associations for women of all ages.

² The following information comes from various conversations, but not from anything approximating a proper or careful study. It is presented to underscore the variability. Correction of any misconceptions would be greatly appreciated.

Beyond the traditional culture and religion, however, there are now reactionary outside pressures threatening women's participation in Kidal. The Touraeg tradition and the hopes of women and girls are being crushed by the pressures of Pakistani fundamentalists and tribal rivalries and the consequent pressure from the leadership of ADEMA and the highest levels of the Mali government for a duly elected woman mayor to step down.

And class differences must not be forgotten. In Timbuktu, there are Bela women who are family slaves, doing the work. Another common situation is when villages send girls to Bamako to be servants in homes for two to three years. While there, the girls listen to the radio and learn a great deal; they then bring to their villages that new awareness when they return to marry.

An additional constraint that is at once related to tradition and to modern political culture is the view that politics is a dirty and corrupt realm in which women should not be sullied. Malians have suggested that there is a general "allergy" to politics these days and that politics have become degrading. Thus, the current perceptions of politics reinforce the view that women should not be compromised by politics and that only vulgar would be found in that realm.

Information

One important constraint on interest of women in and their capability to make decisions is their lack of information. The informational constraints fall in two categories: limited channels of communication and limited content. Regarding sources of information, illiteracy is one impediment because it precludes the receipt of information from newspapers, magazines, and other printed material. Poverty is another—constraining access to television and radios. The last, as indicated above, is time. Thus, we heard from women that they were not at all aware of decentralization, that they did not know what the communes are doing, and that they had not voted.

One issue related to information channels for women is the reliance on radio and the possibility that radio broadcasts are not sufficient for informing rural women. There are a number of critical uncertainties: Do women listen? Do they have radios? Do they control use of the radios, in competition with their husbands' or sons' interests? Do they have time to listen, or are they so busy with other activities they cannot give it their attention? Are they interested in listening?³ Even if, as has been suggested by some, women's use of radios is increasing, radios pose two weaknesses: (1) the information is not permanent—that is,

³ The UNICEF Change project included a study in Mopti about communications and found that women did not listen to the radio. Also, Mme. Simaga at the Institute of Human Sciences researched women's use of radios in Sikasso. She found that of the 30 women in a village, only one or two had heard the program and many households did not have radios; if they did, the men or young boys had them; and women typically did not have the time to listen when they were doing many tasks—such as grinding meal, sifting, cutting, making sauce, tending to a baby, and waiting for water to boil—all at the same time.

women cannot go back and consult it, and (2) since radio is unidirectional, it does not allow for discussion and debate among women.⁴

At the same time, there is a severe shortage of relevant content that would motivate and inform decision-making. Information is power. Women cannot put themselves forward with knowledgeable positions if they lack information. Similarly, they cannot visualize themselves participating in decision-making if they do not know of those instances where women have been elected or have participated in communal consultations.

Economic Power

Another factor that limits the respect and legitimacy in decision-making of women is their lack of economic means. “To have a voice, the opportunity to participate in decisions, one must be able to put something on the table.”⁵ Women’s economic activities and the resources they may generate would strengthen women in several ways. First, economic resources may free the necessary time for discussion and participation on local decision-making. Second, they empower women, giving them the sense they can accomplish things. Third, they raise the stature of women within their communities, both with men and with young people. Last, not having economic interests precludes a range of interests that would compel women to set certain priorities, support particular local investment, and take an interest in national policies. Once they have economic interest, women may understand the importance of roads and communication infrastructure, impediments to accessing credit, the need for effective contractual mechanisms, and the problems of taxation. They would be better poised to understand the role that government—local and national—plays or ought to play and to feel the need to engage in setting priorities and allocating resources.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

The key opportunities or assets for increasing women’s participation in local decision-making are women’s groups and social capital, information dissemination, and efforts to teach and practice women’s participation in relation to the new local government structures.

Women’s Groups and Social Capital

One essential and encouraging factor regarding women’s political participation in rural Mali is that women’s groups are numerous and fundamental to the social structures and social

⁴ One factor to increase women’s use of radios is that since 1992 more than 100 community radio stations have been established, offering more programming in their local languages and on subjects that interest them. It is also interesting to note that one organization sought to distribute cassette recorders to women’s groups, but did not access the requisite funding.

⁵ Comment from unidentified women during group discussion.

capital of rural communities. Just about everywhere there are *groupements de femmes*. Some focus on celebrations, such as marriages. Others revolve around economic activities, to lighten or share burdens of gardening, soap-production, and crafts. But as sources of information and decision-making structures, some of those groups are not visible—especially as compared with the village associations for men. Another place to find women gathered and exchanging information is in their own centres d’alphabétisation.⁶ It is rare, however, that such women’s groups engage in politics or promote women’s interests. But beyond the very base of the villages, in regional centers like Segou, Sikasso, and Mopti there are some women’s associations that are more sophisticated and where leaders are often officially, politically active.

Another potential asset for enhancing women’s participation in decision-making is the ways in which women work together, reinforce one another, and get power through networks and groups. Sometimes, this may be with regard to economic activities. In other cases, there can be generation-specific or intergenerational support. Sometimes, women are able to participate in training because their *belle soeur* or another wife in polygamous families has taken on their tasks in their absence.

Mechanisms for Receiving Information

The traditional channels of information for women include celebratory events, word-of-mouth, the chief’s wife, town criers, theater for sensitization, and institutions such as nongovernmental organizations and groups. These should be recognized and used as ready, familiar, and effective mechanisms if relevant, modern, political information were purposefully directed into these channels. In addition, the proliferation of local radio stations, if women listen to them, offers a possibility of disseminating more information of relevance to women.

Existing Initiatives and Evolving Experience

Four projects illustrate efforts to launch or strengthen women’s participation in local decision-making through the decentralization and consultation process:

1. **Charte de Partenariat pour la Promotion des Femmes Rurales.** In 1999, the Ministry for Decentralization and Institutional Reform sponsored a working group to develop a charter for women’s inclusion.⁷ Participants included mayors of communes, representatives of four ministries, rural representatives, NGOs, and women’s organizations.⁸ The Ministry of Decentralization is requiring communal plans but recognizes that, absent purposeful intervention, women will be left out. This process was launched to ensure that women’s needs and voices are included in the new communal

⁶ There are reportedly 1,800 centers within 100 kilometers of Bamako.

⁷ As preparation, the Ministry of Decentralization began with a feasibility study in 1998-99.

⁸ See Annex D for list of participants and identification of various actors and their roles in developing the Charter.

process. The resulting Charter states that each plan should include a minimum of 25 percent for women—in identifying activities, in the budget, and in eventual expenditures—as well as the assignment of tasks to women.⁹

The Ministry for the Promotion of Woman, Child and Family (Ministry for Women) was designated to ensure leadership in implementing and evaluating the Charter. A key implementation step was to go from village to village systematically to inform people about decentralization and the Charter—based on the expectation that once men and women understand the decentralization process and know the content of the Charter, it will not be hard to mobilize the women. Further, rather than trying to change the way villages make decisions, the Ministry wanted to look at how women already participate and to build on that knowledge. To that end, it did an institutional analysis of the villages, focusing on how women receive information and affect decisions, and found ways women participate in the decision-making process.

With Winrock as the implementing organization, the Ministry for Women launched a project in May 2000, *Implication des femmes dans le processus de la decentralisation: Concretisation de la charte de partenariat pour les femmes rurales dans les communes rurales de Diago et de Dialakoroba*, to pilot participatory development of communal development plans. The first step for elaborating a plan of action is training the key groups: women, local authorities, and NGOs. Next, recognizing that training is supported by practice, the training in decentralization and planning will be followed by setting priorities for their communes. Mayors, communal council representatives, women's groups, NGOs, will come together to elaborate their local development plans.

2. **Community Consultations**, facilitated by INAGEF. In this case, two days of participatory meetings were facilitated to help four communes assess their needs and determine main constraints. Each commune listed its constraints on a flipchart. However, of the 35 women and men invited, there were only 4 women and they were not active participants. In that case, women's needs may not have been effectively articulated and prioritized. The next steps will be planning and advocacy campaigns, and setting up small groups, each with activity regarding information dissemination. Here, too, the challenge will be to include sufficient numbers of women with the training and skills to effectively represent women's interests.
3. **Formation des Femmes Leaders en Gestion de Projet**. This is an effort implemented by COFEM with funding from CECI to address the role of women in the communal system. Altogether, 18 localities will participate in the training with three training sessions with 100 participants. There will be 3 localities as pilots or tests for careful

⁹ See “La Promotion des Femmes Rurales dans les Collectivites Territoriales,” Mme Oumou Bagayoko and M. Adama Sissouma, December 1998 and “Atelier: Definition d’Une Charte de Partenariat pour la Promotion des Femmes Rurales”, February 1999, Winrock, AWLAE/CAATR. Also, the “Charte Partenariat pour La Promotion des Femmes Rurales,” which includes an introduction, the Charter, *mesures d’accompagnement*, actors and their roles, and monitoring and evaluation measures. The Ministry reported having sent the platform to donors and ministries with hope of support but received no response.

monitoring. The objective is that the participants develop and manage some micro-projects. Once they have received the training and developed the ideas, the village must find the resources and implement the projects. After six months, there will be an evaluation. In fact, on November 2, 2000, they started a four-day training for 30 people (from 6 localities and 2 urban sites), including 24 women and 6 elected officials. The opening ceremony included the mayor, the vice-mayor, the government delegate, and the communal delegate, which showed the support of men and of elected officials. In the implementation, there were some problems, however, particularly regarding inclusion of women who did not know French and who were not literate.

4. **Association Sikassoise pour l'Encadrement de l'Enfant et de la Mere (ASEEM).** This organization was launched in 1996 and focuses on three groups: (1) women and children, (2) young people and adolescents, and (3) truckers and HIV/AIDS. ASEEM has focused on healthcare for women and children and on improving communication among women and between women and their husbands. It started by helping form women's groups, setting up committees in towns. The responses of three different groups demonstrate the success of the project. First, there have been astonishing reactions by women as they begin to realize how much they—and their mothers—have not known. Second, men have not only become supporters of the initiative but they also have started bringing their wives to the center. Last, and of real significance regarding communal plans, there are new partnerships now with the health office of their cercle and the mayor has proposed a meeting. Thus, ASEEM illustrates how a health project can be a basis for empowering and informing women, sensitizing men, and collaborating with local authorities to access resources. It demonstrates how information can lead to communication, followed by the capacity to identify common issues and to push for local government resources.

Summary of Opportunities

- Local women's groups and social capital, including economic groups, such as savings and credit groups, and income-generating activities;
- Current initiatives and experience by other donors, international organizations, and women's associations—for example, sensitization, different sorts of training, and experiments related to *concertations* for participatory development of local action plans;
- Success stories emanating from groups and recent experiments; and
- Traditional mechanisms for disseminating information to rural women (such as fairs, theater, family events, griots, radio stations, and literacy programs).

CHAPTER FOUR

A SCHEMA FOR WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

This analysis follows from an effort to answer a basic question, What is needed to politically motivate and mobilize rural women in Mali? The schema stems from two realizations. First, the removal of one constraint to women's participation in decision-making will not suffice if there are other obstacles as well. Thus, we have attempted to identify the constellation of barriers to women's political participation. Second, the removal of all obstacles does not necessarily result in motivation and mobilization—there must be some catalyst, cause, or concern that triggers action. For this reason, our recommendations focus on collaboration with women, groups, and activities in other sectors, such as those relating to healthcare and education.

THE PREDICATES: SENSITIZATION AND TIME

Two predicates support women's participation in decision-making in rural areas, including participation in the local *concertations* for decentralization: (1) sensitization, both for men and for women; and (2) freeing some time in women's days for political discussion, activity, and interest. Before women can take on more visible and effective roles, the men in their communities must accept their doing so—and in fact see it as something positive. At the same time, women must be able to recognize the political roles they already play and take some interest in playing these roles more regularly or publicly.

Further, with 15-18 hour work-days, most rural women lack the time and energy to do anything more than they already do. Thus, labor-saving devices, basic infrastructure, and income-generating opportunities are essential.

INFORMATION: KNOWLEDGE AND INSPIRATION

Although women may know their needs and those of their families and may have opinions about priorities, women's contributions to decision-making also require knowledge about resources that might improve their conditions. Currently, however, standard processes of information dissemination do not reach the average women. Thus, the channels of information must be extended or diversified so women receive information of importance to their social and economic well-being. In addition, women need to know about their own possibilities and about successes they can emulate. Thus, they need information regarding

elected women, women's participation in decentralization consultations, and other sorts of role models.¹⁰

MECHANISMS: GROUPS AND LINKAGES

But even with some interest, time, and information, women will not affect decision-making unless they can work in some unified, collaborative way. The women's groups are critical assets. To date, these groups focus on mutual comfort and support, not political activities. Yet through these groups, women are already accustomed to sharing and discussing information. Through these groups, they already have experience working together to solve problems and overcome adversity. There do not, however, seem to be many linkages between groups—for example, among villages. This would be a way of building power—through greater sharing of information and through pooling resources and constituting larger interest groups.

CAPABILITY: TRAINING

Even given the cumulative importance of the preceding factors—interest, time, information, and group structures—women must have the capability to influence decision-making. Here, training is critical. Further, certain sorts of training are needed to reinforce those other elements. Hence, training should vary according to target group, timing, purpose, and content. For example, some training would be helpful for women in elected positions at the local level; but training also would be helpful for women who have emerged with some leadership capability in their communities and for women at the very beginning of this process.

MOTIVATION, MOBILIZATION, AND ACTION

Without more, neither information nor awareness of rights will necessarily lead to action. There must also be a sense of focus, capability, and solidarity. There must be some issue around which women may use the positive environment, the free time, the information, their group organization, and training. Even those women who recognize the opportunity to participate, have the time and information, belong to a group, and have some training may not necessarily become politically active.

Thus, beyond the obstacles that must be removed and the capacity that must be built, there is a need for a catalyst. The last, critical ingredient must be some motivation for action. Thus, we suggest piggy-backing on existing, successful activities—whether they be related to their children's health or education, access to credit, safety, or transport—whatever may be of

¹⁰ As was observed by someone at CARE/Mali: "We believe that even modest advocacy successes of women at the local (commune, cercle or regional) level are likely to have considerable modeling effects, encouraging other women and other marginalized groups to follow their example."

concern to women in a particular community. This is why the totality of these elements have been suggested and why purposeful links with the Mission's other sectoral programs will be so important, including girls' education, literacy programs, access to credit, potable water, natural resource issues, transportation needs, and fighting HIV/AIDS.

Table 1: Eight Elements for Increasing Women's Political Participation at the Local Level

The Elements	Examples of Inputs	Reinforcing Other Steps
Sensitization	Awareness raising for men; initiating ideas for women that they do affect decisions and have a role to play in the decentralization consultations	Men's support enables women to obtain outside assistance, to feel authorized and recognized, and to engage in a collaborative rather than confrontational process.
Time	Time-savings technologies, such as mills, water pumps, and carts for transport	Women gathering around mills or pumps are also channels of information-sharing.
Information Channels, including Literacy	Radio, theater, fairs and markets, griots, cassettes, information at family events, around mills, at health clinics; some from television. Also basic adult literacy programs	More information channels mean more ways of relaying substantive information and building confidence in the possibilities.
Substantive Information Relevant to Women	Regarding health, access to credit, prices, other women's initiatives, maybe family code	Information reinforces the wish for more information channels and role models.
Hope, Belief, Sense of Possibility—namely, Empowerment	Role models, empowerment from economic activities, experience of small successes or improvements	As this grows, it increases the desire for more information and training, and thus builds capacity.
Groups, Solidarity	Women's groups, both solidarity groups and economic groups like savings and credit groups	These groups may serve as channels of information, forums for discussion, havens for building confidence, and loci for training.
Skills and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual: awareness about politics and decentralization Examples of success to show what women can do and accomplish Technical skills, such as advocacy and how to do village diagnostics to include information about women 	Training sessions are also information channels, provide substantive information, can reinforce sense of hope, and can bring people together.
Motivation, Mobilization, and Action	Some issue, cause, or need that women have already taken up, but for which they lack resources	A cause gives them a subject around which to rally, for which to want information and capacity-building, and a reason to find time.

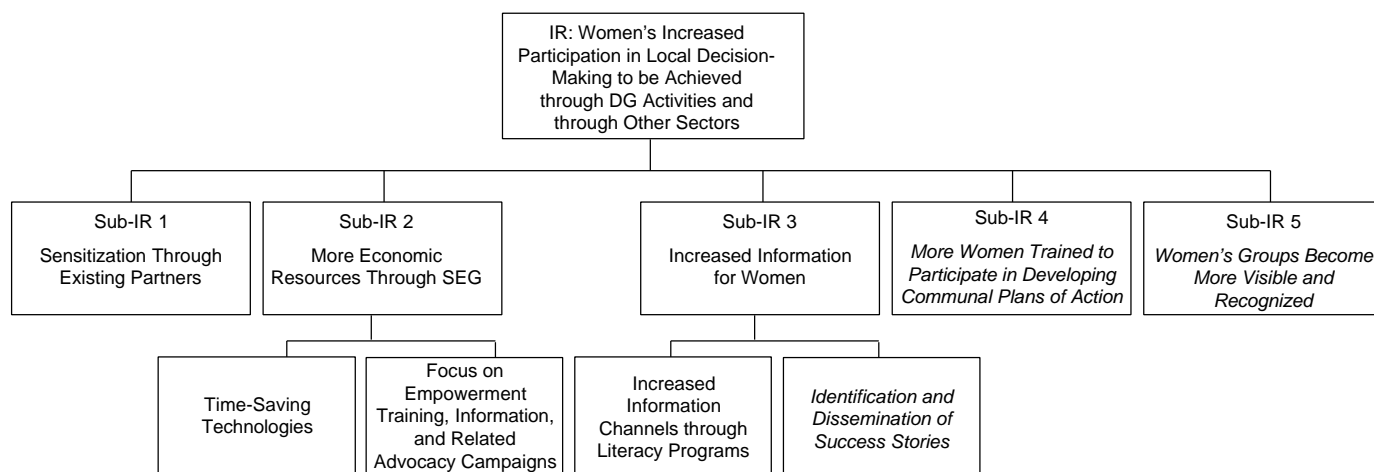
CHAPTER FIVE

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Our suggestions are included in two sections: (1) programmatic recommendations, including activities that are solely D&G, cross-sectoral, and a pilot activity; and (2) preparatory steps and general guidelines. In addition, Annex C offers ideas for how USAID partners might support women’s participation in decision-making through enhanced attention to gender-based barriers and opportunities.

It is important to start with a draft Results Framework that shows how the proposed activities fit within an integrated approach. This framework uses the eight elements in Table 1 to set forth an Intermediate Result: Women’s Increased Participation in Decision-making. There are five sub-Intermediate Results: sensitization, more economic resources, increased information for women, training on participating in developing communal plans of action, and women’s groups. From this schema, it is possible to see how various activities—both D&G and from other sectors—will prepare and encourage women to participate in decision-making in a decentralized political system.

Figure 1: Draft Results Framework for IR—Women’s Increased Participation in Decision-Making at the Local Level*



*Those for which the D&G team would be directly responsible are distinguished by italics.

ACTIVITY-FOCUSED RECOMMENDATIONS

Democracy and Governance Activities

As is indicated in Figure 1, many of the inputs will come from non-D&G activities. The D&G resources would then focus on two areas: training and capacity-building (sub-IR 4), and increasing the visibility of women's groups (sub-IRs 3 and 5). Training may focus on several different subgroups. Where appropriate, training content should include discussion of what participation and politics mean, examples of women's successes in Mali, a focus on what women can do and can accomplish in the current political and economic environment, and general skills such as advocacy and lobbying.

- **Build capacity for elected women in the communes.** Elected women already have interest and opportunity. Often, however, they lack the skills to be effective, both as individuals and as representatives of women as a constituency. Their success will be important to show men the value of women's participation, to ensure attention to women's needs, and to inspire more women to participate in formal politics. These women present an opportunity to feature those who are elected officials in the best light, as role models for other women—doing a job that is unimaginable for them (as opposed to comparing themselves with women leaders in Bamako). Training should include communication skills, understanding of negotiation and coalition-building, and information regarding the successful initiatives around Mali they could propose in their areas. There also should be some focus on connecting these women to their base—in teaching them about constituency-building and about sharing information with women and men in their commune. Further, connecting these women to one another, as a support group and as a network, can have broader benefits. Therefore, it would be helpful to cluster them within a cercle or by several neighboring communes (until there is a group of 12-15).
- **Train a cadre of trainers to work with private voluntary organizations and USAID partners on improving inclusion and empowerment of women.** Such a training course would include two components. The first would focus on ensuring gender-sensitive and women-supportive approaches, including field diagnostics that collect information about women's groups and techniques to ensure women's participation in mixed groups. The other component would help partners design political dimensions to social, economic, and health-related work. This means raising awareness of how citizen needs and initiatives may be addressed and enhanced by gaining access to government resources.
- **Create a Mali Volunteer Corps to work with communities on diagnostic needs assessments that include women's groups and activities.** This is a longer-term training program that would achieve the objective of making the invisible visible (sub-IR 5 regarding making women's groups more visible), gathering information that is often missed and thereby empowering women partners in the communities. The diagnostic tool should include information regarding women's needs, resources, and contributions; the

cultural environment; and the level of political awareness and exposure to information from outside.¹¹

- **Support information campaigns regarding the decentralization program and elaboration of participatory communal development plans that include men and women.** Explain that these plans will involve decisions that have impacts on both men and women's lives. This relates to D&G responsibility both for making women's groups more visible (sub-IR 5) and for increased information for women (sub-IR 3) through identification and dissemination of success stories. Successes should be captured in media that will reach women—from theatre to local radio or perhaps even speaking tours. This involves identifying women who have already participated in *concertations*, who can combine information with their personal experience and who might serve as extension agents to raise awareness in other communes. This would serve the interests of both the Ministry for Decentralization and Institutional Reform and the Ministry for Women.
- **Improve the rural development capacity of educated women.** Some women who already have education, resources, and some skills and information (for example, leaders of women's associations and women's networks such as COFEM) want to reach out to grassroots women. Eventually, their involvement could lead to expanded networks and more vertical linkages. Yet often they are not familiar with effective training methods in rural areas. Training for established women's associations must begin with information about development issues, techniques and approaches for working with women who lack literacy and education, and ways to work with women whose priorities are very basic.¹²

Cross-Sectoral Activities

Beyond D&G activities, the achievement of Women's Increased Participation in Local Decision-making requires collaboration and inputs from other USAID teams that are consistent with those teams' mandates as well. Possibilities include:

- **Work with healthcare and education private voluntary organizations to develop new information content for women.** The idea is to communicate experiences and successes of women in Mali to other women in Mali, including women in Kidal covered by USAID's Special Objective for the north. The first step would be to collect success stories from CLUSA, Save the Children, Care, Winrock, and others. The next step would

¹¹ This suggestion links with USAID's focus on youth and taps into a significant resource identified in an interview with CARE. Apparently, CARE has engaged 20 interns who are well-educated, talented young people who are unable to find jobs. By working with CARE, they get interested work experience, preparing themselves future work rather than sitting idle in a labor market that does not offer sufficient job opportunities. A Mali Volunteer Corps could take a similar approach, training young people while also working on public awareness and making women's contributions more visible.

¹² CECI might support something like this after observing a training where the facilitator used and accepted the use of French with a group that included four or five women who understood only Bambara.

be dissemination—to link with radio stations, and/or with magazine/cassettes, and/or with group of griots. This serves several components, including sensitization of men and women, and substantive information for women. It would partly link with the information Special Objective.

- **Partner with the information Special Objective to conduct participatory research on how and when women use the radio as an information channel.** Do they use it? If there are some disparities, what accounts for where and when women listen? At what time of day do they listen? To what sorts of programming do they listen? This baseline information is needed not only for sub-IR 3 (increased information for women), but also for much D&G programming (for example, for elections and public information) and for all sorts of other programming such as that combating HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, girls' education, and adult literacy.
- **Work with the Special Objective for the north to direct assistance to women's groups where they are not likely to participate in decentralization-related consultations in mixed groups.** Women need some possibility to gather together, to learn about women's rights and develop positive models of Islam, and to learn from examples of women's participation in other parts of Mali.
- **Work with youth programs to ensure that young males receive some sensitization.** These programs can include information and experiences that will focus young men on the value of women's contributions to public as well as private decision-making.

Proposed Pilot Project

The eighth but key element for the political participation of women is that they be motivated or mobilized to act. This means they need to have an issue about which they already care and are organized and informed. Such an issue might be any of many that USAID partners now address—girls' education, children's healthcare, women's healthcare, HIV/AIDS, and access to credit. Where there has already been some work done and women in the community share an objective, they have the "demand" but they often lack the "supply"—namely, resources with which to achieve their demands. The pilot would aim to link successes in other sectors with decentralization and women's participation.

The elaboration of communal development plans is a process of identifying needs, setting priorities, and using the plan to access local resources. If the women already know their needs and priorities, they are ready to be motivated and become effective contributors to the development and implementation of the local plan. The approach would have several steps:

1. Through USAID partners and other donors, identify communities where women are organized around an issue.
2. Do a thorough diagnostic of their particular environment—the allies and opponents, the resources, and the like.

3. Ensure that the leaders in the community, such as chiefs, understand the value of women's increased participation and support it.
4. Give the women some training regarding decentralization, development of communal action plans, lobbying, and advocacy, and some awareness of what political action is (and how they already are doing it and can do more).
5. Support women's discussions with local elected officials about resources and potential partnerships.

RECOMMENDED PREPARATORY STEPS

Before any of the recommended activities are pursued, we recommend preparatory steps to help with prioritizing, selection, design, and implementation:

- To ground-truth this concept paper and identifying priorities, convene a focus group of women who work for the Peace Corps at the local level to obtain their input regarding this report, experience with women's groups, and recommendations. Solicit their suggestions about activity design and implementation.
- To identify and design DG-sponsored training activities, hold discussion and training for USAID trainers (for example, CLUSA, CLUSA subcontractors, Save, Care, Africare, World Education, and Winrock) to discuss this concept paper. Enlist their input and support for designing a training of trainers to improve the awareness and visibility of women's influence over decision-making at the local level.
- To build Mission-wide support for an integrated gender approach, convene USAID groups to discuss and develop an illustrative Results Framework—as a reference and tool for identifying supportive activities and as a point of departure for the new Mission strategy.
- To identify women's groups for the pilot activity, bring together USAID partners, other donors, and the Ministry for Women to identify communities that are developing a local development plan and where women are putting forward their interests with regard to healthcare, education, and economic activities.

GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROGRAMS

The recommendations of this concept paper focus mainly on activities for women. Yet paying attention to gender issues within mainstream activities is another way to enhance women's participation in decision-making. Following are guidelines by which to improve the benefits to women and their contributions. Specific suggestions for USAID partners can be found in Annex C.

- **Begin activities with a diagnosis of the cultural environment.** In the selection of communities or groups with which to work, a diagnostic of the cultural environment is critical. This should include meeting with the village chief as well as assessing needs and resources, including women's groups and women of particular stature who may serve as conduits of information or intermediaries.
- **Find those who are inspired.** It is important to identify projects that have captured women's interest and enthusiasm, and to select participants who have been activists or demonstrated their active concern. For women, it is important to combine democracy and development, linking the abstract notions of democracy to practical accomplishments.
- **Require inclusion of women.** Donors need to insist, at the ministerial levels as well as in local implementation, that women be considered and included. This is one reason for USAID and other donors to provide support for the decentralization process and elaboration of communal plans, ensuring that women are included at the outset.
- **Prepare women to participate in community discussions of plans.** Preparation should be both psychological and technical. Women need knowledge and confidence to participate effectively. Sometimes, this will require separate training for women, through which they may build confidence and reach the same level of skills and comfort as the men with whom they may later debate and discuss priorities and plans.
- **Select partners carefully.** Potential partners should be apolitical and not work with particular political parties or with organizations that are viewed as complicit with or tied to ADEMA (such as CAFO or COFEM). International NGOs and USAID partners must really know and understand the rural context of Mali, and speak the local languages. There must be some collaboration with the Ministry for Women. Winrock, U.S. Peace Corps, and Mali Volunteer Corps may be viable partners.
- **Recognize the heterogeneity of women.** Be aware that women in cities, the elites, often do not understand rural women and visa versa. Some women from Bamako are not the right people to pass along the messages and skills to local women. In each local milieu for women, there is an opportunity to place a woman who can teach and advocate with them. It is important to find women who know rural women or who want to work at that level and be comfortable there.
- **Include discussion of concepts such as "participation" and "political action."** Encourage discussion of these concepts, along with the benefits that women's

participation may bring to women and men alike. This is a first step in building awareness and acceptance.

- **Build appreciation for the benefits of diversity and participation.** Ensure that implementing partners understand and implement an understanding of democratic and diverse participation as a tool not only for democracy but also for effective development.

CONCLUSIONS

This concept paper was to serve several inter-related purposes: to set forth an analytic framework, identify some points of entry for supporting women's participation within the process of decentralization, and suggest some activities to build understanding for the next USAID strategic plan in 2002. Further, the paper was to help the Mission move from dealing with women's issues separately within each Strategic Objective to taking a strategic, integrated approach. The suggested eight elements provide the D&G team with a framework for analysis, program design, activity selection, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Enhancing women's influence over local decision-making may improve not only the success of decentralization but also the results of USAID programming.

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ANNEX A
LIST OF CONTACTS

LIST OF CONTACTS

In Mali:

Mlle. Avril Armstrong, Africare
 Association Féminine “Benkady,” Togou/Ségou
 Association pour le Développement des Communes Rurales “Demen–Sira-Coura”
 Mme. Maïmouna Bado, World Education (Charge du PDC/GC-CNF)
 Mme. Djeneba Cisse, National Coordinator for Mali, Winrock International
 Maïmouna M. Cissoko, Bamako Civil Servant
 Ms. Christy Collins, Assistant Country Director, Care International in Mali
 Mme. Doucouré Kadiatou Coulibaly, National Coordinator, SAGE Project, AED, Mali
 Mme Honorine Coulibaly, MDR/Bamako
 M. Maïmouna Danioko, Journalist, *L’Observateur*
 Maïmouna Dante, Businessperson
 Mme. Mariame Dembélé, Chef de Division Femmes et Développement, Direction Nationale de la Promotion des Femmes, Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l’Enfant et de la Famille
 Alima Diakite, Businessperson
 M. Fanta Medy Diakite, G-Force Coordinator
 Mme. Mariam Diakite, Lawyer, Bamako
 M. Ibrahima Diakite, Supervisor, ASEEM
 M. Barnabe Diarra, Project Coordinator, Save the Children/USA
 M. Noël Diarra, Chef de la Mission de Décentralisation, Ministères de l’Administration Territoriale et Des Collectivités Locales
 M. Abdoulaye Doumbia, INAGEF Formateur
 Groupement d’Intérêt Economique/GIE “BEEBA,” Missira/Ségou
 M. Ibrahim Guire, Formation/Direction Nationale des Collectivités, Ministères de l’Administration Territoriale et Des Collectivités Locales
 Mme. Fatoumata Haïdara, Coordinator, Projet Droits et Citoyenneté des Femmes en Afrique Francophone (DCF), Centre Canadien d’Etude et de Cooperation Internationale
 Mme. Fatoumata Keïta, Directrice Nationale de la Promotion de la Femme, Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l’Enfant et de la Famille
 M. Modibo Keïta, G-Force Animator
 Mme. BA Aïssatou Kone, Chef de Cabinet, Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l’Enfant et de la Famille
 M. Hamidou Mohamed, Chargé des Dossiers du Personnel des Collectivités, Ministères de l’Administration Territoriale et Des Collectivités Locales
 Mme. Kane Sakou Nana, MIRIA/Kati
 M. Bill Noble, Africare
 The People of Djono
 Population of Dionon and Its Deputy
 Mme. Dembele Fatoumata Poubia, Coordinatrice de la Clinique Juridique, Association des Juristes Maliennes
 Honorable Michael Ranneberger, U.S. Ambassador to Mali
 M. Curtiss Reed, Jr, CLUSA
 Mme. Aoua Thiéro Sangare, US-RDA

Mme. Fanta Sangare, US-RDA, Présidente COPPO Femmes
Mme. Some, Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant et de la Famille
Mme. Sonnonkoun Fanta, Ramaitresse de Dionon-Golle
Mme. Alima Konate Sylla, Program Administrator, Gender and NGO Focal Point, UNDP
Mme. Aminata Simbara, World Education
Mme. Toure Rokia Ba, Secretary-General, COFEM
M. Mountaga C. Tall, Président, Congrès National d'Initiative Démocratique
Mme. Traore Salimata Tamboura, Coordinator of Decentralization Training, COFEM
Mme. Fanta Diakité Traoré, Coordinator, ASEEM, Sikasso
Mme. Macalou Tata Traore, Permanent Secretary, COFEM
M. Garth Van't Hul, Technical Advisor for Governance, Care Mali
Mme. Nina Intalou Wallet, Adema, Kidal
The Women of Benkady, Togou
The Women of GIE Bee Ba, Missira, Ségou

In the United States:

Jindra Cekan, Food Security Manager, International Services, American Red Cross
Rosa De Jorio, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology,
Anthropology, and Criminal Justice, University of North Florida
Monica Eppinger, Desk Officer for Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and ECOWAS, U.S.
Department of State
Della McMillan, Associate Research Scientist, Department of Anthropology. University of
Florida
Don Muncy, Africa Bureau, USAID
Catherine Spaur, WIDTECH Project
Susanna Wing, UCLA

USAID D&G Team, and all others:

Kojo Busia, Democracy and Governance Team
Rokiatou Dante, Women and Development Officer
Anna Diallo, Team Leader, Democracy and Governance Team
Mohamed Chérif Diarra, IR2, Education Team
Kadidia Dienta, Coordinator of Activities, Democracy and Governance Team
James Hradsky, Director, USAID/Mali
Martine Keita, SPO, Information and Communications
Yacouba Konate, Democracy and Governance Team
Aïda Lo, IR1, Advisor on Public Health
Gaoussou Traore, Economic Growth Team
Sidiki Traore, Democracy and Governance Team

ANNEX B
TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR
ENHANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

1. Training in mixed groups can be a good idea (to ensure that men hear women's perspectives and that men and women become accustomed to talking with and respecting each other). In such cases, the numbers should be at least 50-50 or more women than men. Further, it is *critical* that the facilitators invite and encourage women to speak. Frequently, however, it is important to work first with women alone. These decisions should be made thoughtfully, based on a local diagnostic needs assessment.
2. There can be no monopolization of discussion, either by the facilitator or by any man in the room. The facilitator must use his or her authority to interrupt, thank the person for his comments, and move the conversation on to others.
3. Training must not be approached as a traditional classroom with a teacher. Adult learning techniques are important for the quality of learning and because teaching methods that are unilateral, imparting of information to the uninformed or uninitiated, do not encourage democratic participation and debate. When a question is asked, the trainer should not answer but should turn to the others in the room to see who can respond—encouraging the exchange of information among the participants. Similarly, participatory methods—by which the participant trainees discover the answers themselves—are useful. For example, meetings about decentralization might ask small groups to draw the level of government or ask them to list the communes in their cercle, rather than the facilitator telling them.
4. Everyone in the room must speak the same language, or there must be constant interpretation. If not everyone knows French, the discussion must be in the local language. This can particularly affect women because their lack of education and literacy means they often do not know French. (This is critical to ensure the flow of information and to empower them.)
5. Try to use visual aids that the women can take home—to share with their husbands, other women in their local women's group, and their sons and daughters. This gives women additional legitimacy and status at home and serves as a tool for passing along information.
6. Donors must monitor the quality of training constantly—perhaps requiring attendance at a gender training for trainers (a small certification course) and spot-checking. Poor facilitators not only fail to transmit information and skills, but also use the valuable time of women and disempower them by reinforcing expectations about the value of their voices and contributions.

ANNEX C
OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH USAID PROGRAMS

WAYS TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION THROUGH USAID PROGRAMS

CARE

CARE's activities that deal with women at the village level, such as literacy and savings and credit, could be sources of partners for the pilot project. The SYSTEMS project is already tapping into existing projects and relationships through, for example, women's savings and credit organizations.

CARE's experience with young interns could be useful in constructing a volunteer corps to spread information and training regarding decentralization and local development plans.

CARE has decided to emphasize women's participation and empowerment in its governance programming, including two new projects of local government capacity-building. One, PACKOB, aims to reinforce the commune as a viable and increasingly democratic entity by turning over program control to local committees. Along with broad guidelines, there is a requirement that special emphasis be placed on women's development priorities. The other, SYSTEMS, focuses on increasingly effective and democratic governance of selected local government bodies in Ségou.

CARE's governance work, not financed by USAID, was originally going to work with local officials but will now focus on with women's groups. This could be a start with women who are not in formal politics. It might be helpful to establish a baseline and periodic performance monitoring from which to glean lessons for others.

CLUSA

CLUSA has a number of examples of women's successes that would become good information to disseminate to women at the local level. It would be helpful to capture the successes through a search for the best and effective practices involving women and then to construct an information dissemination campaign that used women's channels of communication to share role models and examples of women's effective political actions.

Some CLUSA clients may be good partners for the pilot project—to participate in the elaboration of their commune's local development plan and thereby access needed resources.

SAGE

SAGE's 10 mechanisms for data collection and discussion, which were developed by the Institut Populaire Educatif, might be very useful for the first phase of sensitization before women participate in elaborating the communal development plan.

Save the Children

Save the Children's activities with women—for example, credit and savings, literacy training at Centres Féminins, economic activities like gardening, and health programs for women and children—will be a source of potential partners for the pilot project.

Save the Children's experience with theatre and skits to sensitize communities should be instructive for the sensitization element of increasing women's political participation as well as illustrating use of one traditional channel of information for women.

Save the Children's work with women who were elected to communal councils would be instructive for USAID in thinking about whether to train and empower elected women officials, especially regarding whether to help build a network and capture any success stories for dissemination.

Save the Children might add some political sensitization and content to its literacy training and the economic activities.

World Education

World Education's work with associations of students' parents lends important lessons on how women may (or may not) participate in mixed decision-making processes. More should be learned from them and applied to efforts to include women in the elaboration of communal development plans.

World Education's experience with designating local women who ensure girls' education by checking with families when girls are not at school could be useful in identifying women to be members of the decentralization corps.

ANNEX D
CHARTRE DE PARTENARIAT POUR LA PROMOTION DE
FEMMES RURALES, ALONG WITH THE LIST OF
PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORKING GROUP

CHARTRE DE PARTENARIAT POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES RURALES

Les documents suivants sont partie intégrante de la charte de partenariat :

- 1 - La note introductive
- 2 - La charte
- 3 - Les mesures d'accompagnement
- 4 - Les acteurs et leurs rôles
- 5 - Le mécanisme de suivi - évaluation

Au Mali, la population est rurale à près de 80% et est estimée à 9,7 millions d'habitants dont 51% sont des femmes (recensement général de la population et de l'habitat de 1997). Cette population présente un taux d'analphabétisme plus important chez les femmes (95% en milieu rural contre 82% en ce qui concerne les hommes).

Dans la société malienne et particulièrement le milieu rural, la problématique de la promotion des femmes est très souvent abordée de manière conflictuelle. En effet lorsqu'il est question d'intégrer l'approche genre dans la résolution de problèmes de développement, le message tend à opposer la femme à l'homme, malgré les efforts souvent louables des communicateurs. Ceci explique les difficultés importantes qui sont rencontrées dans la mise en œuvre des recommandations ou des actions significatives pour la promotion des femmes.

Dans la perspective de la mise en œuvre de la politique de décentralisation au niveau rural, une opportunité s'offre pour créer les conditions d'une amélioration de la situation des femmes rurales. En effet les collectivités territoriales ont pour mission la gestion de leurs propres affaires. Il s'agit donc de montrer aux différents acteurs institutionnels au niveau local l'importance du rôle de la femme dans le développement et de trouver un mécanisme pour la promotion de celle-ci.

En effet, la décentralisation ramène l'administration (et avec elle une partie du pouvoir de décision et des ressources), dans un espace proche de la famille, considérée comme le micro - espace dans lequel les femmes exercent déjà un rôle et une influence plus importante qu'ailleurs. La création des collectivités territoriales au niveau local permet la gestion décentralisée des préoccupations de développement par les citoyens et citoyennes. Le développement local correspond beaucoup plus à une dynamique (un processus) où les **acteurs** (hommes, femmes et leurs institutions) **inter-agissent** dans la mise en valeur des **ressources diverses** à travers des **activités d'organisation, de production et de gestion**.

La décentralisation est donc une opportunité à saisir pour préparer tous les intervenants au niveau local afin que les femmes participent à l'élaboration et à la mise en œuvre des politiques locales de développement et que leurs préoccupations soient prises en compte.

La promotion de la femme au niveau rural doit être une démarche globale, où les femmes et les hommes sont complémentaires, elle porte sur des domaines aussi variés que sensibles: éducation, santé, logement, information, environnement, agriculture, prise de décision... Seule une dynamique de concertation, d'implication, de responsabilisation des femmes elles-mêmes permettra l'émergence de solutions adaptées et durables. La réussite impose la participation de tous les acteurs concernés.

La formalisation des relations entre les différents acteurs doit être conçue comme un **processus dynamique** qui crée les conditions d'épanouissement de la femme rurale. Dans cette perspective les relations entre les différents acteurs doivent tenir compte des contraintes traditionnelles et surtout poser des **principes de partenariat** partagés par tous et autour desquels ils seront mobilisés.

Au delà des déclarations de principe, il s'agit de parvenir à l'établissement d'une véritable charte entre les acteurs du développement dans les collectivités territoriales. Dans

chaque collectivité territoriale, ces acteurs doivent convenir d'une série d'actions minimales à exécuter pour la promotion des femmes.

Dans un cadre décentralisé, le rôle des élus des collectivités territoriales est essentiel dans la coordination de toutes ces initiatives de développement.

CHARTRE DE PARTENARIAT POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES RURALES

La charte de partenariat concerne le niveau national, régional et local. Elle contient les principaux axes opérationnels suivants autour desquels les parties s'engagent :

1. La mise en place d'une plate-forme de concertation, impliquant les femmes, autour des programmes et des projets de développement des collectivités territoriales :

La plate forme de concertation devra être installée dans toutes les collectivités territoriales (communes; cercles et régions). Elle sera composée des acteurs suivants :

- Les élus des collectivités territoriales ;
- Les représentants de l'Etat et agents des services déconcentrés au niveau des collectivités territoriales ;
- les partenaires au développement des collectivités territoriales : ONG, associations, groupements de femmes, leaders communautaires, bailleurs de fonds, etc.

Cette plate-forme devra, outre les rencontres ad hoc, profiter des sessions de l'organe délibérant de la commune, du cercle ou de la région autour du programme de développement.

Les rencontres périodiques qu'elle organisera auront pour objectif l'élaboration consensuelle de programmes et projets de développement prenant en compte les besoins, priorités et actions des femmes.

Le programme de développement de la collectivité est l'outil de mise en cohérence et de coordination des actions des différents acteurs.

les élus locaux sont responsable de l'animation de cette plate-forme.

2. La mise en place d'un mécanisme de mobilisation des ressources pour le financement des programmes et projets de promotion des femmes rurales :

Les différents partenaires des collectivités territoriales doivent s'impliquer pour une mobilisation plus importante des ressources en faveur des programmes et projets de développement intégrant les préoccupations des femmes rurales.

A cet effet, ils doivent participer à :

- l'identification des potentialités des collectivités et à l'évaluation des capacités de mobilisation des ressources disponibles;
- l'appui-conseil aux collectivités territoriales dans la mobilisation et la gestion des ressources disponibles y compris l'épargne local ;
- le renforcement des capacités de gestion et de contrôle des collectivités territoriales et spécifiquement des organisations de femmes.

3. L'appui des partenaires aux programmes et projets de promotion des femmes rurales :

LES MESURES D'ACCOMPAGNEMENT POUR LA MISE EN ŒUVRE DE LA CHARTRE DE PARTENARIAT

Dès lors que la charte de partenariat pour la promotion des femmes rurales a l'adhésion des différents acteurs, des mesures concrètes doivent- être prises pour accompagner sa mise en oeuvre. Il s'agit notamment de :

1. L'information et la formation : Elles doivent permettre de mettre en évidence la dynamique de diffusion et de compréhension indispensable pour l'application de la charte. Un effort doit, donc, être fait pour une meilleure *préparation des acteurs* afin qu'ils comprennent et jouent pleinement leurs rôles

2. Les appuis techniques et financiers à la charte de partenariat : Pour un départ, la mise en œuvre de la charte de partenariat implique une approche minimale dans le sens de la coordination des initiatives. Cette coordination concerne essentiellement les principaux partenaires institutionnels qui appuient déjà le processus de développement et particulièrement la promotion de la femme au niveau rural.

Un tel espace pourrait être le lieu de discussions des initiatives et propositions d'actions pour éviter les doubles emplois et renforcer les synergies. Un tel exercice suppose au préalable une coordination interne chez chaque partenaire. Pour rendre la coordination opérationnelle, il faudrait tenir compte des étapes suivantes:

- faire le point des initiatives d'appui à la promotion des femmes dans les localités concernées avec leurs principales caractéristiques (domaines d'intervention prioritaires, périodes, montants, lieux, règles, etc);
- définir les modalités de collaboration autour d'un programme minimal d'intervention par rapport aux besoins et priorités des femmes des collectivités pour la promotion de la femme au niveau rural;
- intégrer dans les critères d'évaluation des programmes et projets leur impact sur la promotion de la femme;
- préciser le rôle et la place de chaque partenaire dans la mise en œuvre des programmes.

3. Le suivi et l'évaluation de la charte de partenariat :

Le suivi et l'évaluation de la charte de partenariat fournissent un système d'information qui éclaire la prise de décision des différents acteurs. Les modalités concrètes de suivi et d'évaluation passent par le contrôle des éléments suivants :

- la régularité des rencontres que les acteurs de chacun des niveaux (national, régional et local) organisent,
- la participation active des partenaires engagés dans la promotion des femmes rurales ;
- la participation effective des femmes à ces concertations au niveau national, régional et local;
- le nombre de programmes réalisés dans le cadre du partenariat et leur impact réel sur les conditions de vie des femmes rurales

L'intégration des préoccupations des femmes dans la planification des programmes et projets de leurs collectivités doit être une démarche solidaire basée sur la complémentarité et la synergie entre les différents acteurs qui interviennent sur le territoire de la collectivité.

Ces appuis des partenaires doivent privilégier les actions d'intérêt communautaire ou collectif. Ils doivent dépasser le cadre souvent restreint d'association ou d'ONG.

Ainsi les partenaires au développement peuvent convenir de soutenir, les programmes et projets de développement des collectivités territoriales prenant en compte les préoccupations des femmes, **à concurrence d'au moins 25%**. Ces engagements doivent- être connus de tous les acteurs.

Les différents acteurs et leurs rôles dans la mise en oeuvre de la charte de partenariat :

Acteurs	Rôles
<u>Collectivités territoriales</u> (Elus locaux)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mise en place de la plate-forme de concertation autour de l'élaboration des programmes et projets de développement ; • Animation régulière et continue de cette plate-forme ; • Elaboration et mise en oeuvre des programmes et projets de développement ; • Instauration d'une dynamique de concertation systématique des groupements et associations de femmes par les organes des collectivités territoriales autour des questions sectorielles de développement ; • Veiller au respect de l'application de la charte
<u>Etat :</u> <u>MDRI</u> <u>MPFEF</u> <u>Tous Ministères</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriation de la charte et de ses mesures d'accompagnement et integration dans les textes d'orientation pour les collectivités territoriales ; • Traduction de ces textes dans les langues nationales ; • Veiller au respect de leur application et en assurer le suivi-évaluation; • Appui à la mise en oeuvre de la charte
<u>Partenaires au développement :</u> <u>ONG</u> <u>Bailleurs de fonds</u> <u>Autres partenaires (privés)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appui à la mise en oeuvre: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. de la charte et de ses mesures d'accompagnement ; 2. des programmes et projets de développement. • Appui au suivi-évaluation • Appui au renforcement des capacités techniques et financières des collectivités territoriales et des groupements et associations de femmes. • Appui à la diffusion de la charte • Veiller au respect de l'application de la charte • Appui à la mobilisation des ressources financières et matérielles • Appui au financement des programmes et projets • Plaidoyer pour l'application de la charte et la promotion des femmes rurales • Appui technique et financier dans le cadre de la mise en oeuvre des

<u>Groupements et Associations de femmes</u>	<p>programmes et projets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veiller au respect de l'application de la charte. • Renforcement des capacités de leurs membres : leadership, planification, suivi-évaluation, gestion, , etc. • identification précise des actions ou programmes qui permettent l'épanouissement de la femme (allègement des travaux domestiques : création de points d'eau, installation de moulins, etc., construction des centres de protection maternelle et infantiles, de dispensaires, octroi d'espaces de production, formation, etc.) ; • mobilisation et participation des femmes autour des priorités de la commune et aux différentes rencontres de la plate-forme de concertation; • Appropriation et large diffusion de la charte auprès de leurs membres; • Suivi de la mise en oeuvre et lobbying autour de la charte
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LE MECANISME DE SUIVI-EVALUATION :

Le leadership du suivi-évaluation de la mise en oeuvre de la charte de partenariat est assuré par le Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme, de l'Enfant et de la Famille en collaboration avec Winrock International et des partenaires au développement intéressés.

PERIODICITE :

Au niveau national : Le suivi au niveau national sera semestriel et l'évaluation, biennale.

Au niveau local : Le suivi sera permanent, et l'évaluation annuel.

PRODUITS : Rapports semestriels et/ou circonstanciés de suivi
Rapports annuels/biennals d'évaluation
Bulletins périodiques.

INDICATEURS DE SUIVI : Sans être exhaustif, les indicateurs peuvent être les suivants:

- Le niveau d'appropriation par les acteurs
- Le nombre de rencontres effectuées au niveau des collectivités territoriales autour de la plate-forme
- Le niveau de participation des femmes à la plate-forme de concertation
- Le niveau d'implication des acteurs
- Le nombre de programmes élaborés prenant en compte les préoccupations des femmes.
- Le niveau de réalisation desdits programmes
- Le nombre de documents (charte) diffusés dans les langues nationales
- Le nombre de collectivités touchées par la diffusion
- Le nombre de missions de suivi-évaluation effectuées
- Le nombre de rapports produits
- etc.

**LISTE DE PRÉSENCE À L'ATELIER DE DÉFINITION D'UNE CHARTE
DE PARTENARIAT POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES RURALES AU MALI**

N° d'ordre	Noms et Prénoms	Adresse
1	Mme MARIKO Oumou DIALLO	CAATR
2	Mme KEITA Mah SOUCKO	Banamba
3	Mme MAIGA Oumou MAIGA	C.T./M.E.
4	Mr Oumar SANTARA	Maire Ségou
5	Mme COUMARE Aminata TRAORE	Representante Maire de Koulikoro
6	Mme TOURE Yaba TAMBOURA	COFEM
7	Mme KEITA Assa SOUCKO	AWLAE/Mali
8	Mme DEMBÈLE Oulématou SOW	Présidente CAATR
9	Mme COULIBALY Djénébou TRAORE	MPFEF
10	Mr Kassoum SAMAKE	MDRE
11	Mme SOW Oumou BAGAYOKO	MDRI
12	Mr Bekaye COULIBALY	Paysan Zambougou (Ségou)
13	Mr Karim TRAORE	Paysan Zambougou (Ségou)
14	Mme Aminata BAGAYOKO	Présidente de UGF de Cinzana (Ségou)
15	Mr Karamoko SACKO	Coordonnateur programme ON FARM
16	Mr Serge ABY	Chargé de la communication pour le Bureau Régional de Winrock d'Abidjan
17	Mme Aminata ISSABERE	CCA ONG
18	Mr BOUTCHUE Isidore	Winrock Abidjan
19	Mme SOUKOUNA Aminata SOUMARE	CAATR

ANNEX E
PROJET: IMPLICATION DES FEMMES DANS LE
PROCESSUS DE LA DECENTRALISATION

WINROCK INTERNATIONAL

**Programme des Femmes Leaders Africaines dans les Secteurs de l'Agriculture et de
l'Environnement (AWLAE)**

Financement : Ford Foundation

**Projet : Implication des femmes dans le processus de la décentralisation : Concrétisation
de la charte de partenariat pour les femmes rurales dans les communes rurales de Diago et de
Dialakoroba**

I. Présentation de Winrock International :

L'institut international Winrock pour le Développement agricole est une organisation indépendante, à but non lucratif qui travaille avec ses partenaires dans le monde pour augmenter les opportunités économiques, gérer de façon durable les ressources naturelles et protéger l'environnement. Il est structuré autour de quatre programmes majeurs qui, en Afrique, sont :

1. Agriculture : Le programme de valorisation agricole en milieu paysan (PROVAL/ON-FARM) cherche à promouvoir la productivité agricole, la croissance économique et améliorer la qualité de la vie pour le petit agriculteur et sa famille.
2. Développement du Leadership : Le programme AWLAE vise à développer une masse critique de femmes professionnelles qui ont confiance en elles-mêmes, prennent des risques et sont conscientes de la condition féminine et sont solidaires avec les femmes rurales.
3. Gestion des Ressources naturelles et Foresterie : Ce programme offre aux communautés la formation dont elles ont besoin pour identifier les problèmes de gestion des ressources naturelles et développer les plans qui conservent et font le meilleur usage des ressources pour l'alimentation et les revenus.
4. Energie : Ce programme vise à promouvoir les techniques d'énergie propre.

De manière transversale, WI a mis en place un Réseau Africain pour l'Analyse des Politiques Rurales (ARPAN) qui réunit des chercheurs africains pour les aider à faire des recherches sur le développement économique et rural de l'Afrique et publier les résultats.

II. Présentation du Programme Awlae :

Le programme des femmes africaines leaders dans les secteurs de l'agriculture et de l'environnement (African women leaders in agriculture and environment) connu sous l'acronyme de AWLAE est un programme africain conçu dans le cadre du programme plus global de « Leadership et développement des ressources humaines » de Winrock International et dont l'objectif vise à accroître la masse critique de femmes capables, dynamiques et engagées dans le combat contre l'insécurité alimentaire, la dégradation des ressources naturelles et la pauvreté. Le programme vise 4 objectifs stratégiques qui sont :

1. **Préparer des femmes leaders** : à travers l'octroi de bourses de formation, le leadership pour le changement, le mentoring des filles, pour amener les femmes dans des positions qui peuvent favoriser des changements bénéfiques pour les femmes rurales
2. **Créer un environnement favorable** : en favorisant une intervention partenariale avec les différentes parties et en contribuant aux réflexions stratégiques de développement rural et de promotion des femmes, à travers des études, des recherches, des ateliers, des conférences. Il s'agit aussi d'impliquer les hommes pour soutenir les femmes dans leurs actions
3. **Créer des mécanismes durables** : par la création d'organes d'exécution (ONGs, centre genre, NAC) et le renforcement de leurs capacités d'intervention en vue d'assurer à terme la relève de Winrock International.

4. **Plaidoyer pour les femmes rurales** : en mettant en œuvre des projets pilotes et activités modèles et dont les résultats permettent de renseigner les décideurs politiques sur les changements stratégiques nécessaires.

III. **Justification du projet « Charte de partenariat pour les femmes rurales »** : Ce projet se situe dans le cadre de la mise en œuvre du programme Awlae, notamment la réalisation de son 4^{ème} objectif stratégique, à savoir « plaidoyer pour les femmes rurales ».

Le plaidoyer pour les femmes rurales est basé sur le postulat suivant :

« Le Mali est un pays à économie essentiellement agropastorale, avec une population à près de 80% rurale et dont la frange féminine représente un peu plus de la moitié (51,7%). Ces femmes jouent un rôle prépondérant dans le secteur de l'agriculture car elles sont actives à chacune des étapes de la production, du conditionnement, de la conservation, de la transformation et de la commercialisation des produits. Elles sont, paradoxalement, celles qui ont le moins accès aux différents facteurs de production, (ressources, formation, organisation, équipements, etc.). Il y a donc là un besoin de rééquilibrage pour augmenter la masse critique des professionnel(le)s de l'agriculture avec les moyens et les savoirs qui vont permettre au secteur agricole de jouer pleinement son rôle de moteur de l'économie »

L'espoir dans la décentralisation comme une opportunité de promotion des femmes rurale est fondé sur les caractéristiques suivantes :

- La création de collectivités territoriales au niveau local permet la gestion décentralisée des préoccupations de développement par les citoyens et citoyennes. La décentralisation ramène l'administration (et avec elle une partie du pouvoir de décision et des ressources) dans un espace proche de la famille considérée comme le micro-espace dans lequel les femmes exercent déjà un rôle et une influence plus importante qu'ailleurs.
- Le **développement local** correspond beaucoup plus à une **dynamique** (un processus) où les **acteurs** (hommes, femmes et leurs institutions) **interagissent** dans la mise en valeur des **ressources diverses** à travers des **activités d'organisation, de production et de gestion**. La politique de décentralisation est donc une opportunité pour préparer les intervenants (acteurs) au niveau local afin que les femmes participent à l'élaboration et à la mise en œuvre des plans locaux de développement et qu'ainsi leurs préoccupations y soient prises en compte.

C'est ce postulat et cet espoir qui ont guidé le programme Awlae dans la définition et l'application d'une charte de partenariat pour la promotion des femmes rurales.

IV. **Processus suivi par le programme AWLAE** :

1. Rencontre avec les paysan(ne)s : Afin d'identifier les contraintes qui annihilent les efforts des femmes rurales dans le secteur agricole, le programme Awlae, en collaboration avec la Direction Nationale de l'Appui au Monde Rural, a organisé du 29 au 30 Septembre 98 une table ronde à Ségou qui a regroupé des paysans et paysannes et le personnel technique d'encadrement (ONG et gouvernement). Cette réunion a permis d'identifier et prioriser les problèmes comme suit :

- La surcharge du calendrier de travail des femmes

- L'analphabétisme et le manque de formation technique et d'information
 - Le manque d'équipement et la difficulté d'accès au crédit agricole
 - L'insuffisance des infrastructures socio-sanitaires
 - L'inégale répartition des revenus provenant de la production agricole
 - La faible implication des femmes dans la prise de décision au niveau de la cellule familiale et au niveau de la société civile (Associations traditionnelles et formelles)
 - Le manque d'accès et/ou de contrôle de la propriété foncière
2. Etude pour définir la meilleure stratégie pour aider à la résolution de ces problèmes, dans un contexte de décentralisation : Réalisée en Décembre 98, cette étude a permis d'analyser la problématique de l'intégration des préoccupations des femmes rurales dans la planification des programmes et projets de leurs collectivités, de proposer un instrument opérationnel pour réussir cette intégration : Une charte de partenariat entre les acteurs du développement local (élus des collectivités territoriales, représentants de l'Etat, agents des services déconcentrés, partenaires au développement y compris les ONG et les groupements féminins) pour la promotion des femmes rurales
3. Atelier des acteurs pour la définition du contenu de la charte de partenariat pour la promotion des femmes rurales : Cet atelier, organisé les 4 et 5 Février 99, a regroupé les paysans et paysannes présents à la table ronde de Ségou, des élus communaux, les partenaires ONGs et bailleurs de fonds, les représentations des structures de l'Etat (Décentralisation, Ministères chargés des femmes, de l'environnement, du développement rural) Les acteurs ont convenus de trois axes opérationnels et trois mesures d'accompagnement qui sont :
- Axes opérationnels :
 - ⇒ La mise en place d'une plate-forme de concertation, impliquant les femmes, autour des programmes et projets de développement des collectivités territoriales. Les rencontres de ces plate-formes auront pour objectif l'élaboration consensuelle de programmes et projets de développement prenant en compte les besoins, priorités et actions des femmes. Les élus locaux sont responsables de l'animation de ces cadres de concertation
 - ⇒ La mise en place d'un mécanisme de mobilisation de ressources pour le financement des programmes et projets de promotion des femmes rurales : Identification des potentialités et évaluation des capacités de mobilisation des ressources, appui-conseil dans la mobilisation et la gestion des ressources, renforcement des capacités de gestion et de contrôle des collectivités en général et des organisations de femmes en particulier
 - ⇒ L'appui des partenaires aux programmes et projets des collectivités territoriales prenant en compte les préoccupations des femmes à concurrence d'au moins 25%.
 - Mesures d'accompagnement :
 - ⇒ L'information et la formation des acteurs sur la charte de partenariat
 - ⇒ Les appuis techniques et financiers à la charte de partenariat

⇒ Le suivi et l'évaluation périodique de la charte de partenariat

4. L'application de la charte de partenariat : Pour tester l'opérationnalité de la charte, le Programme Awlae a responsabilisé le Ministère chargé de la promotion des femmes dont l'organe d'exécution technique a été la Direction Nationale de la Promotion des Femmes. Cette structure a constitué un comité d'exécution composé des partenaires suivants :

- L'ONG AWLAE/MALI
- L'ONG Collectif d'Appui et d'Assistance Technique Rapprochée (CAATR)
- Le Collectif des Femmes du Mali
- La Mission de décentralisation et des Reformes Institutionnelles à travers la chargée des questions « femmes rurales »
- La DNPF
- WI/AWLAE

Ce comité a défini un plan de travail en 5 points :

- Effectuer une mission de reconnaissance et un état des lieux en matière de prise de décision et particulièrement de la participation des femmes à cette prise de décision
- Procéder à une mission d'information et de sensibilisation des acteurs sur la charte de partenariat et son application dans les deux communes
- Procéder à la formation des acteurs pour leur donner les capacités à contribuer à l'élaboration du plan local de développement de la commune
- Appuyer la mise en place de la plate-forme de concertation dans les deux communes et l'élaboration concertée du plan local de développement 2001 - 2003
- Suivre et évaluer à terme l'exercice de test de la charte dans les deux communes.

IV. Résultats obtenus :

- La mission de reconnaissance et l'état des lieux dans les communes : Elle a permis d'avoir une situation physique de chaque commune avec les données secondaires nécessaires, d'identifier les acteurs intervenant dans la prise de décision au niveau villageois et communal, d'identifier les contraintes à la participation des femmes dans le mécanisme et par ailleurs les opportunités pour elles de le faire.
- La mission d'information et de sensibilisation sur la charte de partenariat : Elle a permis la traduction illustrée en livret de la charte dans la langue bamanan parlée dans les deux communes et sa diffusion aux participants au cours des assemblées villageoises. Elle a été l'occasion de (1) restituer les résultats de la mission d'information pour faire prendre conscience aux villageois de la faible participation des femmes à la prise de décision et des incidences de cette faiblesse sur le développement socio-économique du village, (2) donner une explication approfondie de la charte, de ses implications et des opportunités qu'elles pouvait offrir à la communauté en tant qu'outil de dialogue et de développement, et (3) informer des actions à venir dans le cadre du plan d'action du comité afin de préparer les acteurs à recevoir les formations et à s'apprêter pour contribuer aux concertations de la plate-forme.

- La mission de formation des acteurs : Cette mission a permis le renforcement des capacités des différents acteurs comme suit :
 - Les élus communaux : Planification du développement (identification des besoins de l'ensemble des populations, catégorisation, priorisation, programmation, recherche de financement), le processus d'élaboration et d'adoption du budget communal selon les textes, la participation selon la charte de partenariat
 - Les structures techniques et ONGs intervenant dans la commune : La charte de partenariat (principes, contenu, implications), importance du rôle des femmes dans le développement de la commune et besoin de solidarité, processus d'élaboration des plans locaux de développement et rôles des organisations techniques dans ce processus, contribution à la mise en place d'un mécanisme de mobilisation des ressources pour le financement du plan local de développement
 - Les femmes rurales dans les communes : Statut de la femme, processus d'élaboration des plans locaux de développement et nécessité d'une plate-forme, la charte de partenariat, contenu et opportunités pour les femmes, stratégie d'identification des besoins des femmes et de négociation des « parts » au sein de la plate-forme.
 - Les leaders communautaires (chefs de quartiers, imams, notables, communicateurs traditionnels, leaders d'opinions) : La charte de partenariat, contenu, principes et avantages pour la communauté, les conditions de réussite du processus de développement : la responsabilisation de tous les acteurs, le processus d'élaboration des plans de développement locaux, les changements d'attitude et de comportement.
- La mission d'appui à l'élaboration des plans locaux de développement : Ces différentes formations ont permis aux maires de procéder à la mise en place des plate-formes composés des élus communaux, des représentants des villages, des organisations de femmes, des structures techniques. La mission a rappelé les principes de base de la rencontre à savoir :
 - La propriété de l'exercice de planification par les participants à la plate-forme
 - La participation libre de chaque participant
 - Le besoin de consensus sur chacune des décisions à prendre
 - La prise en considération des besoins spécifiques des femmes
- ✍ Elle a ensuite aidé dans l'identification des grands domaines de développement : Santé, éducation, hydraulique, transport, énergie, agriculture, élevage, gestion des ressources naturelles, organisation, formations techniques, commerce, etc.. Dans chaque domaine, les participants ont identifié, priorisé, planifié et budgétisé les activités à réaliser au cours des trois années du plan.

VI. Difficultés rencontrés :

Le manque de préparation de l'équipe à cet exercice : L'équipe constituée n'avait aucun antécédant auquel se référer. Ce qui a nécessité de leur part la recherche d'une compréhension

commune des concepts de la décentralisation (processus d'élaboration du plan local de développement, processus d'adoption des budget, les thèmes de formation et leurs contenus, le découpage des communes, etc.) et quelques tâtonnements quant à la démarche. Les élus communaux nouvellement installés avaient des problèmes de connaissance de leur territoire et de reconnaissance de la part des chefferies traditionnelles dans certains villages. Le travail en équipe avec des personnes qui travaillent dans des structures avec d'autres tâches a ralenti le travail au gré de leur disponibilité

VII. Les atouts :

L'exercice a été formateur pour les membres de l'équipe et a constitué une expérience pour le programme AWLAE qui pourra désormais améliorer la démarche et les outils utilisés pour la participation de la société civile dans la gouvernance démocratique.

Chaque acteur au niveau de chaque commune a fortement apprécié l'exercice du fait qu'il a permis à l'ensemble des acteurs concernés d'être impliqués dans le processus d'élaboration du plan communal au delà du groupe « femmes rurales » qui était visé. Par ailleurs il a permis un contact plus rapprochée et plus constructif entre le conseil communal et les responsables villageois et ainsi, à travers le dialogue qui s'est instauré, d'aplanir beaucoup de tensions qui existaient avant.

L'exercice a enfin permis aux femmes d'évoluer dans un cadre de concertation et de contribuer à l'élaboration d'un document d'importance pour leur commune et leur village, ce qui évidemment, contribue à renforcer leur confiance en-soi et à développer leur leadership.

ANNEX F
NOTE DE PRESENTATION DE L'ASSOCIATION POUR
LE DEVELOPPEMENT DES COMMUNES RURALES



**ASSOCIATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT
DES COMMUNES RURALES
« DEMEN - SIRA - COURA »**

**Note de présentation de l'Association
pour le Développement des Communes Rurales
A.D.C.R.**



ASSOCIATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT DES COMMUNES RURALES « DEMEN - SIRA - COURA »

L'Association pour le Développement des Communes Rurales (A.D.C.R.) est une association créée le 25 mars 2000. Son siège est à Dionon Koblen, commune rurale de N'Gouraba. L'A.D.C.R est composée des membres bénévoles de différents regroupements et associations.

L'A.D.C.R a pour objectif de :

- sensibiliser les villages et les populations par rapport aux rôles des élus communaux
 - leur faire connaître leurs droits et devoirs
 - favoriser leur développement par l'éducation et la formation
 - lutter contre la désertification et favoriser la protection de l'environnement
 - favoriser l'enseignement dans les communes rurales
 - sensibiliser les populations par rapport à la santé et à l'assainissement
 - dynamiser le partenariat entre les communes et les bailleurs de fonds
 - lutter pour le renforcement de la démocratie et la libre administration
 - contribuer à la sauvegarde de l'écologie
 - promouvoir le développement et le progrès des femmes
 - aider au développement de l'agriculture et de l'élevage
 - prendre des mesures initiatives d'investissements
 - aider les populations dans le cadre de l'accès à l'eau potable
-



**ASSOCIATION POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT
DES COMMUNES RURALES
« DEMEN - SIRA - COURA »**

-
- favoriser et appuyer la commercialisation des produits agricoles et maraîchers.

Les personnes de contact de l'A.D.C.R.

- Tièblé dit Salif Doumbia, président, village Dionon Koblen
- Flatiné dite Aya Sacko, secrétaire générale, village Diena II
- Bakary Keïta Trésorier, village Koni
- Contact à Bamako : BP : E1737
Téléphone : 20 60 82